

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS, COMPLETE LISTING OF CLAIMS
IN ASCENDING ORDER WITH STATUS INDICATOR

Please amend the following claims as indicated.

1. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder, comprising the steps of:

(a) mixing an aqueous ammonium tungstate solution with a carbon powder in a proportion to reduce and carburize ammonium tungstate to form a slurry,

(b) drying the slurry to prepare a precursor,

(c) subjecting the precursor to a reduction and carburization by heating to a temperature, at which a reduction and carburization proceeds, in a non-oxidizing gas atmosphere to form a reduced and carburized product,

(d) mixing the reduced and carburized product with a carbon powder in a proportion required to carburize a W_2C component and/or a W component in the reduced and carburized product into WC, and

(e) subjecting the reduced and carburized product mixed with the carbon powder to a carburization by heating to a temperature, at which a carburization proceeds, in a hydrogen atmosphere.

2. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein the ammonium tungstate in step (a) is at least one of ammonium metatungstate and ammonium paratungstate.

3. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein ~~a purity of~~ the ammonium tungstate in step (a) iscomprises a purity of at least 99.9% by weight based on the content of tungsten in the total metal component of said solution.

4. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 3, wherein ~~a purity of the ammonium tungstate in step (a) is~~ comprises a purity of at least 99.99% by weight based on the content of tungsten in the total metal component of said solution.

5. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein a concentration of the aqueous ammonium tungstate solution in step (a) is within a range of 20-70% by weight.

6. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein each carbon powder in step (a) and step (d) is a carbon black powder having a purity of at least 99.9% by weight.

7. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 6, wherein each carbon powder in step (a) and step (d) is a carbon black powder having a purity of at least 99.99% by weight.

8. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein an amount of ~~a~~the carbon (C) powder in step (a) with respect to the tungsten (W) component in ammonium tungstate by atomic ratio C/W is within a range of 3-4.

9. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein ~~a drying temperature~~ the slurry in step (b) is

dried at a drying temperature of not more than 350°C.

10. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein the non-oxidizing gas atmosphere of the reduction and carburization in step (c) is a mixed gas which substantially comprises a nitrogen gas at normal pressure and a CO gas, said CO gas being produced by the reduction and carburization of the precursor~~reaction~~.

11. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein atthe temperature of the reduction and carburization in step (c) is within a range of 900-1600°C.

12. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 11, wherein atthe temperature of the reduction and carburization in step (c) is within a range of 1000-1200°C.

13. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 1, wherein atthe temperature of the carburization in step (e) is within a range of 900-1600°C.

14. (Currently Amended) A process for producing a ~~fine~~-tungsten carbide powder according to claim 13, wherein atthe temperature of the carburization in step (e) is within a range of 1000-1400°C.

15. (Currently Amended) A ~~high-performance fine~~-tungsten carbide

powder, ~~wherein~~ comprising (a) an average particle size as measured by the Fischer Sub sieve Sizer process is of 0.8 μm or less, (b) a maximum particle size in a particle size distribution as measured in accordance with ASTM B430-79 is of 1 μm or less, (c) the content of tungsten based on the component excluding a non-metal component is being at least 99.9% by weight, and (d) the content of nitrogen and that of oxygen in crystal lattices are being respectively within a range of ~~0.05-0.30~~ 0.08-0.20% by weight and ~~0.10-0.60~~ 0.10-0.35% by weight and (e) a lattice constant of an a-axis and that of a b-axis being respectively within a range of 0.29020-0.29060 nm and 0.28380-0.28420 nm.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Canceled)

18. (New) A tungsten carbide powder produced by the process according to claim 1.

19. (New) A cemented carbide body produced by using the powder according to claim 15.

20. (New) A cemented carbide body according to claim 19, wherein the powder comprises at least one of chromium carbide (Cr_3C_2) and vanadium carbide (VC).

21. (New) A cemented carbide body produced by using a powder comprising the powder according to claim 15.